

WT 11-65



STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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FCC Mail Room

DOUG GOEHRING
COMMISSIONER

ORIGINAL

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

October 12, 2011

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

As both North Dakota's Commissioner of Agriculture and a third-generation family farmer, I urge you to approve AT&T's request to merge with T-Mobile, a proposal under review in the **FCC's 11-65 docket**.


As you know, this merger will result in broader availability of AT&T's forthcoming 4G LTE network. This technology will enhance the quality of life for our rural communities, with respect for our farms, agribusiness and service providers. It will also facilitate rural development projects and aid our rural residents in contacting emergency services when or if the need arises allowing fire, ambulance and police to be more responsive and effective when protecting the public.

As a family farmer, I work with my son to operate a 2,000-acre, no-till farm in south central North Dakota. Our success, and the success of small farms like ours, depends on a variety of factors. Two things that ag producers don't control are weather and markets, but many producers need to monitor the weather and crop markets to mitigate or manage risk. The ability to access first-rate technology for what is, now more than ever, a tech-dependent industry, should be a given.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently released a study indicating that 65 percent of farms have access to a computer – but only 12 percent of those regularly use the computer for marketing purposes. One can only assume that a driving reason their use is limited is that of the lack of high-speed Internet connectivity. Given the frenetic pace of technological evolution today, if the Administration fails to make good on its commitment to expand rural broadband deployment, farmers and other rural Americans could forever find themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Like non-agriculture related enterprises, farms can utilize innovative and emerging technologies to stay competitive in a challenging industry during difficult economic times. Please work with your fellow commissioners to see that the AT&T/T-Mobile merger moves forward and provides the broadband access that, for many hard-working Americans, is a truly vital tool for success.

Sincerely,


Doug Goehring
Commissioner of Agriculture, State of North Dakota

CC:
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn

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